AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A sheet feeder having an upstream side and a downstream side, the sheet feeder comprising:

a suction carrier that sucks an uppermost sheet of sheets piled up and carries the uppermost sheet from the upstream side to the downstream side in a carrying direction;

an oblique carrier that carries a sheet, wherein the oblique carrier is located downstream of the suction carrier, wherein the oblique carrier carries the sheet slantingly toward a guide wall in order to position an edge of the sheet along the guide wall, and wherein the oblique carrier carries the sheet downstream in the carrying direction; and

a handling member for allowing only the uppermost sheet carried by the suction carrier to pass the handling member,

wherein the sheet feeder separates sheets one by one from the sheets piled up on a sheet feeding table and then carries the sheets,

wherein there are provided:

a detector <u>located on the sheet feeder at a location</u> for detecting a front edge of the sheet and a rear edge of the sheet which has passed the handling member and has been put on the oblique carrier, wherein the detector is located downstream of the handling member; and

a retracting mechanism, wherein ~~for retracting~~ the handling member is retracted by the retracting mechanism to a position away from an operative position adjacent the sheet passing the handling member ~~when~~ in response to the detector detecting ~~detects~~ the front edge of the sheet, and wherein ~~returning~~ the handling member is returnable to the operative position by the retracting mechanism ~~when~~ in response to the detector detecting ~~detects~~ the rear edge of the sheet after the detector detects a front edge of the sheet.

2. (Previously Presented) The sheet feeder according to claim 1, wherein the retracting mechanism holds the handling member away from the sheet every time the sheet is detected by the detector.

3. (Previously Presented) The sheet feeder according to claim 1, wherein the retracting mechanism holds the handling member away from the sheet for the entire time that the detector detects the sheet.

4. (Previously Presented) The sheet feeder according to claim 2, wherein the retracting mechanism holds the handling member away from the sheet for the entire time that the detector detects the sheet.

5. (Currently Amended) A sheet feeder having an upstream side and a downstream side, wherein the sheet feeder separates sheets one by one from

sheets piled up on a sheet feeding table and a then carries the sheets, the sheet feeder comprising:

a pickup carrier that picks up an uppermost sheet of sheets piled up and carries the uppermost sheet from the upstream side to the downstream side in a carrying direction;

an oblique carrier that carries a sheet on the oblique carrier, wherein the oblique carrier is located downstream of the pickup carrier, wherein the oblique carrier carries the sheet slantingly toward a guide wall in order to position an edge of the sheet along the guide wall, and wherein the oblique carrier carries the sheet downstream in the carrying direction;

a handling member for allowing only the uppermost sheet carried by the pickup carrier to pass the handling member,

a detector located on the sheet feeder at a location for detecting a presence of a sheet which has passed the handling member and has been put on the oblique carrier, wherein the detector is located downstream of the handling member; and

a retracting mechanism, wherein ~~for holding~~ the handling member is held away from an operative position adjacent the sheet passing the handling member in response to ~~when~~ the detector detecting ~~detects~~ a front edge of the sheet, and wherein ~~returning~~ the handling member is returned to the operative position ~~when~~ in response to the detector ~~detects~~ detecting a rear edge of the sheet after the detector detects a front edge of the sheet.

6. (New) A sheet feeder having an upstream side and a downstream side, the sheet feeder comprising:

a suction carrier that sucks an uppermost sheet of sheets piled up and carries the uppermost sheet from the upstream side to the downstream side in a carrying direction;

an oblique carrier that carries a sheet, wherein the oblique carrier is located downstream of the suction carrier, wherein the oblique carrier carries the sheet slantingly toward a guide wall in order to position an edge of the sheet along the guide wall, and wherein the oblique carrier carries the sheet downstream in the carrying direction; and

a handling member for allowing only the uppermost sheet carried by the suction carrier to pass the handling member,

wherein the sheet feeder separates sheets one by one from the sheets piled up on a sheet feeding table and then carries the sheets,

wherein there are provided:

a detector located on the sheet feeder at a location for detecting a front edge of the sheet and a rear edge of the sheet which has passed the handling member and has been put on the oblique carrier, wherein the detector is located downstream of the handling member; and

means for retracting the handling member away from an operative position adjacent the sheet passing the handling member when the detector detects the front edge of the sheet, and returning the handling member to the operative position when the detector detects the rear edge of the sheet after the detector detects a front edge of the sheet.

7. (New) The sheet feeder according to claim 1, wherein the oblique carrier carries the sheet slantingly toward a guide wall in order to position a side edge of the sheet along the guide wall, and wherein retracting mechanism retracts the handling member such that the oblique carrier carries the sheet with no interference by the handling member.